

THE

Sup.

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF NORTH AMERICA.

APPROVED BY THE CLASSES,

AND ADOPTED

by the "Synod of the German Reformed Church in
the United States" and the "Synod of the Ger.
Reformed Church of Ohio and Adjacent
States," respectively, at their Annual
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CONSTITUTION.

For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary that there should be certain offices and judicatories, and a strict attention to doctrine; of all which the following ecclesiastical ordinances treat.

PART FIRST.

OF THE OFFICES.

The offices of our Church are fourfold, viz :

1. *The office of Ministers of the Word.*
2. *The office of Teachers of Theology.*
3. *The office of Elders.*
4. *The office of Deacons.*

CHAPTER I.

Of Ministers of the Word.

ART. 1. No person shall be allowed to exercise the office of a minister who has not been previously recognized as a candidate for the ministry, according to the established order of the Church.

ART. 2. A candidate for the ministry is one, who, having submitted to an examination by the proper ecclesiastical judicatory, has been approved, and licensed to preach the Gospel, with permission to accept a call from one or more congregations.

ART. 3. Every such examination, shall be public, or at least, open to any member of Classis

or Synod who may choose to attend, and shall be made by the Synod, or by that Classis under whose care the applicant commenced his Theological studies, or with which he may be regularly connected at the time of concluding them; and shall embrace all the subjects taught in the Theological Seminary. Very particular attention shall also be paid to his orthodoxy, his piety and the purity of his intentions in seeking the ministry. The recorded report of such examination shall simply state the result as satisfactory or unsatisfactory, without specifying particulars.

ART. 4. The examination of the applicant having been sustained, he shall then be required to attest his adherence to the Church in its doctrines and discipline, by subscribing the following formula in a book to be provided and kept for that purpose, viz :

“We, the undersigned, hereby testify that we honestly and truly hold the doctrines of the Heidelbergh Catechism, to be the doctrines revealed to us in the Bible, and promise moreover faithfully to preach and to defend the same. We also declare and promise, that we will carefully observe and comply with all the ordinances, in accordance with the word of God, which are now, or may be hereafter introduced by the authorities of the Church; and also that we will cheerfully and readily receive and submit to all their admonitions and decisions when constitutionally expressed, so long as we remain in connexion with the Church.”

The applicant whose examination has been sustained, shall, upon his subscribing the fore-

going formula, be entitled to a certificate of licensure, signed by the presiding officers of the judicatory, before which his examination was held.

ART. 5. In extraordinary cases and for good reasons, applicants for licensure, may be admitted to the ministry, who have not gone through the whole course of study prescribed for the Theological Seminary. But in all such cases, when the application is made to a Classis, it must be sustained by a unanimous vote.

ART. 6. A licentiate or candidate for the ministry, is permitted only to preach the word, and may not, under any circumstances, administer the Sacraments. He has no vote in Classis, nor can he be appointed a delegate to Synod. He is moreover, under the care and subject to the jurisdiction of the particular Classis that licensed him, or under whose supervision he has been placed by Synod; he must attend its meetings and give to it an account of his ministry, until he shall be regularly dismissed and received into connexion by another.

ART. 7. No licentiate shall be admitted to ordination, unless he shall have been appointed to a mission, or has a call from one or more congregations, and no call shall be valid unless the congregation or charge from which it proceeds, has been constituted a pastoral station by the Classis within whose bounds it is situated. In that case the licentiate shall be examined and ordained by the Synod or the Classis to which the station belongs. If however, it should not be situated within the bounds of any Classis, then the consent of the Synod must be had to the acceptance of the call; and in every case it

must appear that the people calling the minister really and truly intend to support and provide for him as their pastor.

ART. 8. No one shall be admitted to ordination who has not attained the age of 21 years, and every one shall certainly accept the call in view of which he applies to be ordained.

ART. 9. Licentiates or ordained ministers from ecclesiastical bodies in regular correspondence with Synod, or from those whose doctrines harmonize with those of the German Reformed Church, may be received into our connection by Classis or Synod, upon their presenting a regular certificate of dismissal, and subscribing the formula prescribed in the case of applicants for licensure. When an applicant comes from a religious denomination maintaining doctrines different from those of the German Reformed Church, he shall, in addition to complying with the above requisitions, openly and explicitly declare on his part, that he has renounced such doctrines as contrary to the Holy Scriptures and the standards of the German Reformed Church. If there be grounds of presumption against the doctrines and morals of any applicant from whatever body he may come, it shall be competent for the Classis or Synod to propose such inquiries as shall enable them to proceed with freedom in his case.

ART. 10. All applicants for licensure and ordained ministers from foreign countries, shall be at least two years in this country besides complying with the requisitions made of other applicants, before they can be admitted into full and regular connexion either by Classis or Synod. They may, however, be permitted to

act as supplies in congregations under the direction of Classis.

Ministers, who come to this country under the auspices or at the direction of foreign ecclesiastical bodies, with which Synod has entered into arrangements with respect to the introduction of ministers from foreign countries, shall not be subject to the above restrictions.

ART. 11. The duties of a minister of the Word are to continue in prayer, to preach the word of God, to administer the holy sacraments, and to watch over the Elders and Deacons, and the whole congregation. It is incumbent upon him, in conjunction with the Elders, to exercise ecclesiastical discipline, and to take heed that Christian order be maintained in all things. He shall "be an example to believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." He shall "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," not neglecting the gift which is given to him by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. He shall "meditate upon these things, *giving himself wholly to them*, that his profiting may appear to all." He shall "take heed to himself and to his doctrine, and continue in these things, that he may save both himself and them that hear him." -1 Tim. 4, 12-16. 1 Tim. 3, 1-7. 2 Tim. 4, 1-5. Titus 1, 5-9. 1 Pet. 5, 1-4. Acts 20, 21.

ART. 12. No licentiate or ordained minister without a charge, shall be permitted to go from place to place and preach at his discretion without the consent of Synod or Classis; nor shall any one preach or perform ministerial acts in the congregation of a brother without his consent. He is permitted to visit and preach at his

discretion only in such vacant congregations as may tender him an invitation to that effect through the properly constituted authorities.

ART. 13. A minister who is compelled by age or infirmity to retire from the service of his charge, still retains a seat and vote in his Classis, and the right to perform ministerial acts when requested so to do, yet so as not to conflict with the provisions of the previous article.

ART. 14. A minister of the word, once lawfully called to his office, is bound to continue in the service of the sanctuary as long as he lives. He is therefore not permitted to devote himself to a secular vocation, unless there be causes of very particular importance for so doing concerning which Classis shall be the judge. It is the duty of the officers appointed for the purpose by the congregation, to obtain a sufficient provision for his support. Our Lord has said, "the laborer is worthy of his hire," and with this most equitable sentiment the established rule is in perfect unison, "They who preach the gospel shall live by the gospel," Luke 10, 7. 1 Cor. 9. 14. St. Paul, therefore, zealously maintains that both he and the other apostles, and the ministers of the Christian Church in general, have an incontestable right to be supplied with all necessary things by those whom they serve, 1 Cor. 9. 1-14. 2 Tim. 5. 17, 18; and he exhorts the Galatians with much earnestness to the exercise of liberality toward their teachers, Gal. 6. 6-9. It is manifest from the texts referred to in Art. 11, that the duties of a Christian minister are of such a nature, and so various, that they not only demand all his time and strength, but must possess his undivided affections, and

do not suffer him to distract his mind with the cares of subsistence. It is therefore, as much the duty of members of the Church to place their minister above disturbing want as it is his duty to preach the gospel to them.

CHAPTER II.

Of Teachers of Theology.

ART. 1. It is the duty of Teachers of Theology to explain the Holy Scriptures and to defend the pure doctrine of the gospel against errors : but chiefly to instruct theological students, and to prepare them suitably for the office of teachers in the Church. Their principal aim shall be to make the students well acquainted with the Holy Scriptures ; to teach them how to ascertain the true sense of the sacred text, and to propound it perspicuously and impressively in their ministrations, in which service, they are required to provide, in their different departments, for the instruction of the students in Ecclesiastical History, Didactic Theology, Church Government, and the duties of the Pastoral office, as well as in the Interpretation of the Scriptures ; that they may experience the power of godliness in themselves, and be in all things examples to the flock.

ART. 2. As it is of the utmost importance, that the Professors of Theology be sound in the faith, have the requisite ability to teach, and possess the confidence of the Church, they shall, for the greater security, always be chosen by a majority of the votes of the Synod. One or more candidates shall be nominated, and the synod shall thereupon appoint the day of election.

ART. 3. A professor continues in office during his life, unless he should fall into heterodoxy or vice, or become disqualified for the duties of his office by infirmities. In such cases the Synod shall institute an investigation, and, after mature inquiry and attention to all the circumstances of the case, decide as the honor of religion, the welfare of the Church, and justice toward the professor shall require. When a professor, having spent his best days in this office, is rendered incapable of further service by infirmities, he shall not be removed without having such a provision for his support as his necessities may require, and the Synod shall be able to make.

When a Professor wishes to resign his office, he shall give notice thereof to the President of the Board of Visitors six months previous to his resignation.

ART. 4. No person can be elected a professor, who does not profess the doctrine of the German Reformed Church.

ART. 5. At his inauguration, a professor elect shall solemnly affirm the following declaration, as by an oath, in the presence of God, in a public assembly :

“You, N. N., professor elect of the Theological Seminary of the German Reformed Church in the United States, acknowledge sincerely before God and this assembly, that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which are called the canonical scriptures, are genuine, authentic, inspired, and therefore divine scriptures ; that they contain all things which relate to the faith, the practice and the hope of the

righteous, and are the only rule of faith and practice in the Church of God ; that, consequently, no traditions, as they are called, and no mere conclusions of reason, which are contrary to the clear testimony of these Scriptures, can be received as rules of faith or of life. You acknowledge farther, that the doctrine contained in the Heidelbergh Catechism, is the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, and must, therefore, be received as in accordance with divinely revealed truth. You declare sincerely, that in the office you are about to assume, you will make the inviolable divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the truth of the doctrine contained in the Heidelbergh Catechism, the basis of all your instructions, and faithfully maintain and defend the same, in your preaching and writing, as well as in your instructions; you declare, finally, that you will labor, according to the ability which God may grant to you, that, with the divine blessing, the students intrusted to your care, may become enlightened, pious, faithful and zealous ministers of the gospel, who shall be sound in the faith."

CHAPTER III.

Of the Elders and Deacons.

ART. 1. The office of the elders, besides what is common to them with the minister of the word, (see Art. 11, Chap. I.) is, to take heed that the ministers, together with their fellow elders and the deacons, faithfully discharge their respective duties. They shall aid in visiting the sick, and contribute according to their ability to the instruction, improvement, and consolation of the members. In the time of the Apos-

ties, the spiritual guides of the churches were called, indiscriminately elders and bishops, or overseers. See Acts 20. 15, compared with verse 28. Titus 1. 5, compared with verse 7. 1 Pet. 5. 1-4. These spiritual guides did not all labor in the word and doctrine; that is, all were not properly preachers of the word, 1 Tim. 5. 7, but it was the duty of all to watch over and to feed the flock. See 1 Peter 5. 1-4. Acts 20, 17-31. Those who did not labor in the word and doctrine, were employed in matters of discipline, and in visiting the sick, James 5. 14, 15, and assisted in the public worship of the Church. All the duties of a minister of the word, except that of laboring in the word and doctrine, are incumbent also upon the elders.

From what is said above, the importance and sacredness of the office of an elder appears. None ought to be elected to this office who are not in full communion with the Church and cordially devoted to the service of God. It is, therefore, a grievous offence to God, when this office is intrusted to men who are characterized by levity; especially when the object is to secure some earthly interest.

ART. 2. The office of the deacons is to collect the alms and other contributions which are designed for the relief of the poor, or the necessities of the congregation; to distribute the alms willingly and conscientiously; and to provide for the support of the ministry of the gospel. The deacons, as well as elders, must be exemplary in faith and practice, that the congregation may be edified by their example. On this account, light-minded men ought not to be appointed to this office. See Acts 6. 1-6. Tim. 3. 8-13.

ART. 3. The elders and deacons are elected by their congregations by a majority of votes. They may be re-elected after the expiration of their terms, at the pleasure of the congregation. The number of these officers is determined by the congregation as it may think proper. Before they enter upon the duties of their offices, they are publicly and solemnly installed by prayer and imposition of hands, agreeably to the constant practice of the Church in the apostolic age.

PART SECOND.

OF ECCLESIASTICAL JUDICATORIES.

CHAPTER I.

Of Ecclesiastical Judicatories in general.

ART. 1. The Ecclesiastical Judicatories are three in number, viz :

1. The Consistory.
2. The Classis.
3. The Synod.

ART. 2. These judicatories shall take cognizance only of ecclesiastical matters. Their power is wholly spiritual. They possess the right of requiring obedience to the laws of Christ and of punishing the disobedient by excluding them from the privileges of the Church, but not by the infliction of any civil penalties.

ART. 3. A higher judicatory shall have power to act only in cases that could not be determined by a lower, or in things that appertain to the general interest of the churches or congregations which it represents, unless it can be

shown that the lower have neglected their duty. A Classis has the same jurisdiction over a Consistory which the Synod has over a Classis.

ART. 4. Every judicatory shall have a President and Secretary. It is incumbent on the President to state and explain the business to be transacted, to maintain order and see that the constitution be not violated. The duty of the Secretary is to keep a faithful record of all the resolutions and other important proceedings of the judicatory.

ART. 5. The business of all ecclesiastical judicatories shall be opened and closed with prayer.

ART. 6. Those who are delegated to any ecclesiastical judicatory must be punctual in their attendance upon its meetings. It is the duty of the congregations they represent respectively to supply the requisite means for this object. Before the delegates can be admitted to a seat and vote, they must first produce their credentials signed by the proper authorities. Delegates from other denominations in fraternal correspondence with our Synod have a seat but no vote.

ART. 7. Any person who thinks himself aggrieved by the decision of a lower judicatory has the right of appeal to a higher, and any Consistory or Classis esteeming itself in like manner aggrieved, shall enjoy the same privilege; but in such case the appeal must be made by the judicatory as such when regularly convened, and not by individuals belonging to it; and whatever is concluded in the highest judicatory by a majority of votes shall be consider-

ed valid and binding, until shown to be contrary to the word of God and this constitution.

ART. 8. Every individual appealing from the Consistory to Classis, or from Classis to Synod, is bound to give to the Consistory or Classis distinct and immediate notice of his intention, and within ten days *after* its rising, to lodge with the President the reasons of his appeal. Should the appellant fail to appear before the higher court to prosecute his appeal and send them no good reasons for his absence, the appeal must be considered as abandoned and the sentence of the lower court final.

ART. 9. No testimony in case of appeal, shall be admitted before a superior judicatory which was not brought before the inferior, except by the consent of both parties. If new evidence arise which is likely materially to alter the aspect of the case, it must be sent back to the lower judicatory for a new investigation.

ART. 10. The necessary effect of an appeal is to stay the execution of a sentence. But if the sentence passed be suspension from church privileges or deposition from office, it shall remain in force until reversed by a higher court.

ART. 11. Any member or members who have voted in the minority in a decision which they conceive affecting the constitution of the Church the interests of religion, or any person or persons being members of the Church, shall be permitted to carry up such a decision to a high-judicatory by way of *complaint* for their examination and supervision, provided they have given to the judicatory of whom they complain, in the case of an appeal, due notice, together with the reasons of their complaint.

ART. 12. Members of judicatories who have voted in the lower court upon a case of appeal or complaint, shall not be allowed to vote on any question connected with the appeal or complaint in either of the higher courts.

ART. 13. When a sentence of any other act of an inferior judicatory is reversed, if they appear to have proceeded according to the best of their judgment and with proper motives, they incur no censure from the higher. But if it be found that they have acted corruptedly or intentionally erred, they shall be dealt with as the nature of the case may require.

ART. 14. No member of an ecclesiastical assembly shall be allowed to enter a protest against any of its acts; any member who dissents from any such acts, shall have a right to require the names of all the members present, who vote for or against the same, to be entered in the minutes, and published therewith for the information of all concerned.

ART. 15. In order to prevent vexation and delay in the judicial proceedings of any ecclesiastical assembly by means of successive appeals in the progress of any trial or investigation, the party who may consider himself aggrieved by any decision, upon any incidental question which may arise before a final sentence is pronounced, may state his objections to such decision, and require to have the same noted in the minutes of the proceedings, to the end that he may avail himself thereof on an appeal from the final sentence, without arresting the progress of such investigation or trial. And in such cases every decision objected to, as well as the objections, shall be distinctly stated in the

minutes of such assembly, and sent up with the appeal to the appellate judicatory for review.

ART. 16. No person belonging to another denomination shall be admitted to a seat, in any of our ecclesiastical judicatories, as an advisory member.

CHAPTER II.

Of Ecclesiastical Judicatories in particular.

SECTION I.

Of the Consistory.

ART. 1. In every congregation, the minister or ministers, if they have any, or more than one, together with the elders and deacons as the representatives of the people, shall constitute the Consistory, or Ecclesiastical council, and shall have an equal right to speak and vote upon all questions coming before them as such. They may, at their discretion, admit as counsellors those who have previously served with acceptance as elders in the congregation.

ART. 2. To the Consistory as such belongs the choice of delegates to represent it in the higher judicatories of the Church, and the management and control of the temporal concerns of the congregation. In the calling of a minister, the judging of a minister or other officers of the Church, the purchase or sale of property, the Consistory can determine nothing conclusively without the consent of a majority of the congregation present. All matters of this kind must first be investigated and determined by the Consistory, and then be submitted

for final decision to the congregation, a meeting of which shall be called for the purpose by the Consistory, on some suitable day.

The spiritual concerns and government of the congregation are, however, committed exclusively to the ministers and elders, and those who may have been admitted as counsellors. It is particularly their duty to watch over the congregation; to guard the doctrine of Christ, and to maintain a strict and wholesome discipline in the Church. They alone have the power to admit members to full communion, and to exclude them from it, when they err from the faith or offend in their morals. It is their duty at all times to be vigilant and faithful in promoting the peace and spiritual welfare of the congregation; and particularly before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, they shall diligently enquire whether any member of the Church has departed from the doctrine of Christ, in faith, or practice, that such as are guilty may be dealt with as the case may require; and in case the Elders neglect this duty, the minister, or ministers may exercise the authority they possess to act alone.

ART. 3. When convened and acting as a spiritual council, the officiating minister, if there be but one, shall be President of the Consistory. If there be a plurality of ministers, they shall preside in turn. If neither be present, an elder may be chosen for the time being. When assembled as a legal corporation under the sanction of a Charter, the Consistory will consult its provisions in the choice of its officers and other proceedings.

ART. 4. The minister, or ministers may at any time upon his or their responsibility, con-

vene the elders as a spiritual council, and *shall* do it at the written request of any two of their number, and when assembled a majority (all having received at least three days notice) shall be a quorum to do business.

ART. 5. In order to avoid, as far as possible, all occasion for strife and division in the calling of a minister to a vacant charge, the election shall in no case be between two or more candidates at a time. One candidate only shall be proposed by the Consistory, or Consistories unitedly when the charge consists of more than one congregation, and his case shall be finally disposed of before a second candidate is proposed. And for the purpose of uniformity, the call for the minister elected, shall be made out according to the form prescribed by Synod.

ART. 6. In the spiritual concerns of a congregation, none but regular communicants shall be entitled to vote; but when the object is merely temporal, as for example, what concerns the property of the congregation, all those may vote who regularly contribute their portion to the maintenance of divine worship, and in other respects demean themselves as church-members, though they be not communicants.

ART. 7. No one of neighboring congregations which have been constituted a pastoral charge and had one minister to serve them in common, shall be permitted to withdraw from such connection, without the consent of Classis.

SECTION II.

Of the Classis.

ART. 1. A Classis consists of all the ministers and the delegated elders of the congrega-

tions within a certain district designated by Synod, which district shall embrace at least three pastoral charges and as many ordained ministers.

ART. 2. The congregation or congregations composing a pastoral charge are represented by their minister and an elder deputed by them, and furnished with proper credentials. If one congregation have two ministers, it shall be represented by these and one elder. A vacant pastoral charge is represented by an elder.

ART. 3. All ordained preachers and deputed elders have equally a seat and vote; but if a pastoral charge have deputed two or more elders, though they may all take part in the deliberations of Classis, they shall have but one vote.

ART. 4. In the annual classical assemblies, after the usual standing Committees shall have been appointed, each minister, and after him the elder associated with him, or, if there be no minister, the elder alone shall give a faithful account of the state of religion and morals in the congregation or charge which he represents, and shall answer conscientiously to such questions as the President may ask, among which shall be embraced the following:

1st.) Are the doctrines of the Gospel preached in your congregation in their purity agreeably to the word of God and the standards of our Church?

2nd.) Are the catechising of the children, the instruction of the youth and the introduction of members into the Church, faithfully attended to in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the German Reformed Church?

3rd.) Is family visitation faithfully performed?

4th.) Is the duty to be observed before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as prescribed in Art. 2nd. Sec. 1. Chap. 2. Part Second, of the Constitution of our Church, carefully attended to?

5th.) Is the temporal contract between minister and people fulfilled in your congregation?

From the information thus obtained, the committee appointed for the purpose shall prepare a report on the state of religion and morals within the classical precinct to be laid before the Synod. The minutes of the preceding year are then read, and the unfinished business occurring in them is taken up. After this, any other business is transacted; and finally the Classis appoints delegates to represent it in the next ensuing meeting of the Synod. The meeting of the Classis shall commence with a sermon, appropriate to the occasion, to be preached by the President of the preceding year, and in case of his absence, by a minister appointed by Classis.

ART. 5. A Classis consisting of three, and not more than six ministers, can be represented in Synod by one minister and one elder. A Classis consisting of seven and not more than twelve ministers, is entitled to two clerical and two lay delegates. One consisting of thirteen and not more than eighteen ministers, may be represented by three clerical and three lay delegates; and in the same proportion for any larger number. Each Classis shall provide for the payment of the travelling expenses of its delegates to Synod.

ART. 6. A Classis shall have power to license and ordain candidates for the ministry within

the restrictions laid down in Chapter 1, Part First, of this Constitution ; to instal ; to grant dismission to a minister in their connexion who is called elsewhere ; to depose, or otherwise to punish, according to his desert, a member of their own body ; and to reinstate a minister, whom *they* have suspended or deposed, when infallible evidence of his reformation appears. They take cognizance of whatever concerns the welfare of the congregations committed to their care, and which does not come within the powers of a Consistory. They decide cases which are brought before them by appeal from Consistories, as well as all cases respecting either ministers or congregations, which may arise within their jurisdiction, and are regularly brought before them ; such as, the forming of new congregations ; the determining of their boundaries, when they are contested ; the decision of controversies between existing congregations ; and the forming or dissolving of connexions, as may be requested, or the Classis may deem expedient.

ART. 7. Before a call is accepted by a preacher, it shall be submitted to Synod or Classis ; but a call shall never be rejected unless there be strong reasons for so doing, neither shall any minister resign his charge or any part of it without the permission of Classis.

ART. 8. No minister can be received by another Classis, until he shall have produced an honorable dismission from the Classis to which he last belonged ; and in no case shall the reception of a licentiate, or of an ordained minister from another denomination by a Classis, be final, until it shall have obtained the sanction of

Synod. A minister dismissed by a Classis, continues amenable to it until he is received into connexion by the body to which he is dismissed; and no Classis shall refuse to receive into its connexion a minister honorably dismissed to it by another, except there be manifest grounds of objection against his doctrines or morals, in which case the certificate of dismissal shall be returned to the Classis from which it was obtained, accompanied with a specific statement of the grounds of objection, upon which an investigation shall be instituted in the same manner as in the case of regular process against an individual, the Classis refusing to receive him being regarded as the accuser.

ART. 9. Three ministers and two elders, regularly convened at the time and place appointed for the meeting of Classis, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

ART. 10. Each Classis shall meet annually at such time and place as it may choose to appoint. The pastor of the place, where the meeting is held, shall procure places for all its members, both ministers and elders, where they may be provided for without charge, during the continuance of its sessions, and furnish the Classis with a copy of the Minutes of Synod of the preceding year.

ART. 11. If any minister absent himself from the meetings of Classis three years in succession without sufficient reason or transmitting a written apology, from selfishness or disrespect to the body, his name shall be stricken from the list of its members, which act shall be equivalent to a suspension from the functions of the ministry.

ART. 12. Whenever the confirming of a call, dissolving of a pastoral connexion, or any other business which could not be done at an ordinary meeting, shall make a special meeting of the Classis necessary, it shall be the duty of the President to call one by a circular addressed to the members, at least two weeks before the meeting takes place. Whenever two ministers and two elders, being members of the Classis, shall in writing subscribed with their names, express their desire for a special meeting, the President shall not refuse to call one. Provided, that the expense attending such meeting be borne by the person or the congregation on whose account, or for whose benefit, it is called. In such meeting, that business only which occasioned it, shall be transacted. In case of the death of the President or of his removal from the bounds of the Classis, or the business occasioning the meeting of the Classis implicates the President himself, the power of calling a special meeting is vested in the Secretary. If the same contingencies should also exist with regard to the Secretary, then the two ministers and two elders making the request, shall be authorized to call the meeting themselves.

ART. 13. It is the duty of every Classis annually to transmit to the Synod, by its delegates, a copy of the minutes of its last stated meeting, and also of its special meetings, if such have taken place. At the same time every Classis shall transmit a statement of the number of its preachers, congregations, schools, Sabbath schools, and communicants and of the number of baptisms, confirmations, and deaths, which have taken place within its bounds; and, to the

and that the Classis may be enabled so to do, it shall be the duty of every preacher, and of every elder representing a vacant congregation, to communicate to the Classis his own statement in writing. These statements shall distinguish the number of confirmed persons who are entitled to commune, and the number of actual communicants. It is the duty of each Classis to note in its minutes how many copies of the minutes of Synod its members wish to have sent to them and in what language.

SECTION III.

Of the Synod.

ART. 1. The Synod represents the whole Church. It is the highest judicatory and the last resort in all cases respecting the government, the peace, and the unity of the Church. It is composed of the ministers and elders who are delegated by their respective Classes, and furnished with evidence of their appointment. It bears the title of, "The Synod of the German Reformed Church in the United States."

ART. 2. The Synod alone has the right to appoint professors of theology, to call them to account for their doctrine or manner of life, and to admonish, suspend or dismiss them, if they have been proved guilty of a fault meriting such treatment.

The Synod has the power to correspond with other religious denominations; to examine, license and ordain to the office of the ministry; to receive and determine appeals from the classes; to give advice in a case referred to it by a Classis; and when requested by the Classis,

to determine such case, and to call a general Convention of Synod whenever it may be deemed expedient, which Convention, however, shall exercise no other powers than those possessed by the Delegated Synod.

The Synod alone governs the Theological Seminary and gives the ultimate decision of all questions respecting Christian doctrine or discipline.

The Synod reviews the proceedings of the Classes, and approves or censures them. With the constitutional concurrence of the Classes, it enacts all ordinances which are binding upon the whole Church. It establishes new Classes, and determines their boundaries; changes the boundaries of existing Classes; and determines all controversies between one Classis and another, or between ministers or congregations of two or more several Classes. But an existing Classis cannot be dissolved, nor any part of it united with another, without its own consent.

ART. 3. The Synod shall meet annually, at such time and place as it shall have appointed at its last meeting, and shall be opened with a sermon by the President of the previous year, and in his absence, by a minister appointed for the purpose. If six ministers and as many elders, or a larger number, from a majority of the several Classes, be assembled at the appointed time and place, they shall constitute a Synod, and be authorized to transact business.

ART. 4. The Synod shall keep a regular and perspicuous record of its proceedings. It may adjourn from time to time, or appoint an extra meeting.

ART. 5. A special meeting of Synod may be called by the President on the written request of four ministers and as many lay-delegates, notice of which, specifying the particular business to be transacted, shall be given to the members of Synod at least three weeks previous to the time of such meeting. The meeting thus called can only be such as was constituted at the previous annual meeting and has power to transact only such business as shall be specified in the call.

ART. 6. The Synod cannot take cognizance of matters within the jurisdiction of a Classis, until they have been brought before it by reference or by appeal; unless it be proved that, in relation to such matters, the Classis has neglected its duty.

ART. 7. Before a proposed ordinance, or a proposed amendment of an ordinance, which is of general interest, can have binding validity in the whole Church, it must be transmitted to all the Classes, and be approved by two-thirds of the whole number. If, at the next ensuing annual meeting of the Synod, it appears by the minutes of the Classes, that two thirds of the whole number have approved the proposed ordinance or amendment, the Synod shall declare the fact, and it shall thereupon be valid as an ordinance of the Church. It shall therefore be the duty of every Classis, to decide upon such ordinance or amendment at its first annual meeting after it shall have been proposed by the Synod.

ART. 8. If the minutes of a Classis contain nothing from which the rejection of the proposed ordinance or amendment may be inferred,

such omission shall be taken for an approval. But if it appear that a Classis was unable to come to a decision, it shall not be counted in taking the number of the Classes, and two thirds of all the rest shall be sufficient to give validity to the proposed ordinance or amendment.

ART. 9. The Synod shall annually choose a President, and a Corresponding Secretary, who shall be its organ in all its correspondence. A Stated Clerk, who shall record its proceedings and superintend their publication according to the order that may be laid down in the *Lemmata* adopted by Synod, shall also be chosen whenever his situation becomes vacant by resignation or otherwise. All credentials, calls to professors, and agreements to which the Synod is a party, shall be signed by the President and Stated Clerk. The latter shall subscribe all extracts from the Synodical records. He shall have charge of the records and the seal of the Synod. All the papers which concern the Synod's correspondence, shall be in the charge of the Corresponding Secretary, those excepted which shall be referred to either of the different Boards connected with the Synod.

ART. 10. The Synod shall annually appoint a Treasurer, who shall take charge of its funds and apply them according to its direction. He shall annually submit to the Synod a statement of the funds, with all the receipts and expenditures. He shall pay out no money, except in obedience to a resolution of the Synod, or of a permanent ordinance of the same, authorizing him to do so.

ART. 11. The Synod shall give every necessary attention to the education of indigent pious

young men for the ministry, and to the prosecution of missionary labors both in the home and foreign field. Its operations in reference to these several objects shall be conducted by Boards specially appointed for the purpose. These Boards shall be subject to the control of Synod and shall each annually submit to it, a faithful report of its transactions, and of the state of the interest committed to its care. Other objects of benevolence shall also receive the attention of Synod from time to time as the wants of the Church may require, and in such manner as shall be deemed best calculated to secure their furtherance.

The Synod shall also have a "Board of Publication" to which shall be committed the management of its Printing Establishment and the superintendence of the publication of the periodicals of the Church and of such books as shall be authorized by Synod. A faithful report of its proceedings and of the state of the Printing Establishment, shall be annually submitted to Synod for its inspection and revision.

ART. 12. In the Synodical meeting, the officers of the preceding year first take their seat. If these are absent, the meeting shall appoint a President and Secretary *pro tem*. After prayer, the credentials of members are received and read, those who are entitled to a seat and are recognized, and the names of the deposed ministers and elders of each Classis are entered upon the minutes. The delegates of responding Churches are then received and admitted to seats by the President. After these transactions, the President for the next year is chosen. When he has taken his

seat, the Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer are elected:

If in the choice of officers, none of the candidates for the same office have a majority of all the votes, the two who may have received the largest number of votes shall be again proposed, and the election repeated. If neither of the candidates obtain a majority, the President shall give the casting vote.

The standing Committees designated by the *Lemmata*, shall then be appointed. The President shall nominate these Committees, subject to the judgment of a majority of the Synod.

If the persons nominated by the President be not approved, the Synod or any member may propose others. Every committee shall consist of ministers and elders.

After the appointment of the Committees, the minutes of the Classes, letters and other papers shall be received and delivered to those Committees to whose duties they relate.

Upon this, the minutes of the preceding year, and those of an extraordinary meeting, if such have taken place, shall be read, and referred to the Committee on Synodical Minutes to report the items of unfinished business occurring in them.

When this is disposed of, Synod shall take up such other business as may claim its attention in the order designated in the *Lemmata*. The report of the Committee on Classical Minutes and that of the Committee on Overtures shall only exhibit those things which claim the Synod's attention, either as subjects upon which it may decide, or as considerations by which it may be guided in forming a decision; and shall

not contain any propositions of the Committees. The report of the Committee on the State of Religion shall include a statement of the deaths of ministers connected with Synod, which have occurred during the year.

ART. 13. The report on the minutes of the Classes, shall contain the following subjects in the order in which they are enumerated :

1. Whether anything, and what, occurs in the minutes of one or more Classes, that seems to merit censure, either as an infringement of this constitution, a violation of justice, an offence against propriety, or a neglect of duty.

2. What one or more Classes request of the Synod, or refer to it, or recommend to its attention, or censure in its proceedings.

3. Whether any, and what appeals to the Synod, occur in the minutes of Classes.

4. What Classes have decided on subjects referred to them.

5. The names of persons licensed, or ordained by each Classis during the year. Also the names of all ministers received, dismissed, suspended or deposed by each Classis.

6. The time and place of the next annual meeting of each Classis, the name of its President and Secretary, and the number of copies of the Synodical Minutes, which it has directed to be sent to it for its use.

ART. 14. The report of the Committee on Minutes shall arrange and note the papers submitted to them, and the subjects to which they relate, in the following order :

Calls from the congregations for ministers.
Petitions and communications.

3. Complaints.

4. Letters of apology from absent members.

ART. 15. Every Committee appointed to attend to business during the recess of Synod, shall submit a report at its next annual meeting, under the pain of censure.

ART. 16. In every morning session the minutes of the preceding day shall be read and revised.

PART THIRD.

OF DISCIPLINE.

CHAPTER 1.

Of Discipline in General.

ART. 1. Christian discipline is the exercise of the authority and the application of that system of laws, which the Lord Jesus Christ has established in his Church, with a view of preserving its purity and honor, either through the amendment or exclusion of unworthy members and ministers.

ART. 2. All Christian discipline is spiritual. Nothing shall therefore be admitted as matter of accusation or considered an offence, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture, or the regulations of the Church founded on Scripture.

ART. 3. All baptized persons are members of the Church, under its care and subject to its government and discipline.

ART. 4. Offences are either *private* or *public*; with respect to each of which, appropriate modes of proceeding belong.

CHAPTER II.

Of Discipline in Particular.

SECTION I.

Of Private Offences.

ART. 1. *Private* offences are those that are known only to a second individual or at most to very few persons.

ART. 2. No offences of this kind shall be brought before the judicatories of the Church, if the delinquent give evidence of repentance after he has been admonished privately or in the presence of two or three witnesses. Nor shall the Church take cognizance of personal injuries, until the rule prescribed by our Lord in Math. 18, 15-17 has been observed.

ART. 3. Those who neglect taking these preparatory steps and undertake to become accusers or informers of their brethren, or in any other way give unnecessary publicity to their faults, shall be considered as laying *themselves* open to the censure of the Church.

SECTION II.

Of Public Offences.

ART. 1. *Public* offences are those that have attained notoriety, the evil effects of which, usually cannot be removed but by a judicial process.

ART. 2. When a person is charged with an offence of this kind, the proper judicatory is bound to take immediate cognizance of the

matter when regularly brought before it, and deal with the offender, in case he be found guilty, after a careful investigation has taken place, as the nature of the offence and the purity and honor of the Church may require.

ART. 3. The following sins especially claim the attention of the Church judicatories, and merit exclusion: heresy, blasphemy, public schism, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, fraud, lawless violence, contentiousness, intemperance, falsehood, filthy lucre, lascivious wantonness, gross profanation of the Lord's day, impudent scoffing, cruelty to servants, and others of similar character.

ART. 4. In admitting accusations against a minister or elder, the rule prescribed in 1 Tim. 5. 19, shall always be observed, and accusers must come forward openly to support the charge.

ART. 5. No complaints in case of scandal shall be heard unless presented within one year after the crime is alleged to have been committed, except it can be shewn that insurmountable difficulties existed, which prevented it.

SECTION III.

Of Process and Trial.

ART. 1. Process against an individual may be instituted before a judicatory either on the ground of *general rumor*, or by *individual accusation*. In the former case, no person need be named as the accuser. In the latter, the process must be in the name of the accuser or accusers, who shall give to the judicatory a distinct statement in writing of the charges preferred.

ART. 2. To render a general rumor or *fama clamosa* a legal accuser, it is indispensably necessary,

1. That it specify some particular sin or sins.
2. That it be extensively circulated.
3. That it be permanent and not transient.
4. That it be accompanied with strong presumption of its truth.

ART. 3. In receiving charges on individual accusation, the judicatory must take great care to satisfy themselves that the accuser or accusers are not actuated by unhallowed motives.

ART. 4. All citations ordered by a judicatory must be signed by the President or Secretary, and served on the parties concerned, at least ten days before the trial. The citation of the accused shall be accompanied with a copy of the charge or charges and the name of the witnesses that are to appear against him, and also with a statement of the time, place and circumstances of the commission of the offence, if possible.

ART. 5. Should the facts of a crime alleged against a person lie at a distance without the bounds of the church or Classis of which he is a member, his own judicatory in such case may either appoint a committee or request a judicatory more conveniently situated, to take the testimony for them, always giving the accused due notice of the time and place of such examination; and in like manner shall the accused, if he wish to procure testimony at a distance for his own exculpation, give proper notice to the Consistory or Classis of such intention.

ART. 6. Should the accused refuse to obey the summons, he shall be cited a second time

to appear as soon as the judicatory may deem reasonable, and if he still refuses to comply, he shall not only be liable to censure for contumacy, but the judicatory may proceed to the investigation and decision of his case, as though he were present.

ART. 7. The trial shall be fair and impartial. The witnesses, after being sworn or solemnly affirmed, shall be examined in the presence of the accused, who shall be permitted to cross-examine them. The whole proceedings of the case shall be accurately and fully recorded, and copies furnished to the parties, if demanded.

ART. 8. No professional counsel shall be permitted to appear and plead in any of our ecclesiastical judicatories. But if an accused person feels himself incompetent to manage his own cause, he may request, or the President may appoint any minister or elder belonging to the German Reformed Church, to act as his counsel.

ART. 9. To establish a charge against any member of the Church, especially against an elder or minister, the testimony of at least two witnesses is required. In cases, however, in which an individual is accused of a repetition of the same or a similar offence, the testimony of one witness for each occasion of the act, may be considered sufficient.

ART. 10. The competency or credibility of a witness may be effected by his minority, his want of knowledge of the facts to be established, his near relationship to the parties concerned, by infamy or malignity of character, and by a variety of other circumstances too numerous to detail, each of which may form a ground of challenge by either party, and invalidate and

sometimes destroy the testimony of a witness in the opinion of a judicatory.

ART. 11. If an elder or deacon commit an offence which brings dishonor upon the Church, or is punishable by the civil law, the elder or deacon shall, upon trial and conviction, be immediately removed from his office by the Consistory. If the offender be a minister, the Consistory shall prevent him from further prosecuting his ministerial functions and refer him to be tried by the Classis as soon as possible. The proceedings of the Consistory in such cases are at their peril, and are not to be considered as a trial, but only a prudent interference and binding over the person accused to the judgment of his peers.

ART. 12. If an ill report concerning the minister, an elder, or a deacon be in circulation, the Consistory shall institute an immediate investigation, and proceed in the case subject to the provisions of this Constitution, as the interests of religion and justice to the individual may require.

ART. 13. If such ill report concern the minister, the Classis shall appoint a committee of their own body to investigate the case, without waiting to be requested by the Consistory. But if they discover that the Consistory is already occupied with it, they shall await the result of its inquiry.

ART. 14. Members of the Church who obstinately reject the admonitions of the Consistory upon being convicted of an offence, or who have committed an act of public scandal, shall be suspended from the communion of the Church. After this suspension and repeated admoni-

tions, they still give no evidence of repentance, they shall be *excommunicated*.

ART. 15. The Consistory have the power of suspending from the communion of the Church ; but if they should neglect to convene at the time appointed for the purpose, after being duly notified, the minister may sit alone as a court to try an individual and on finding him guilty pronounce the same sentence. An act of excommunication or expulsion from the Church, requires the consent of the congregation, whether it be given expressly or tacitly.

ART. 16. Those who are suspended from the communion of the Church, but are not excommunicated, shall be treated, not as enemies, but as erring brethren, and shall be admonished as such, agreeably to the apostolic direction. 2 Thes. 3. 6-15. But if this exclusion, and the admonitions connected with it, have been ineffectual and excommunication has succeeded, those who are thus separated from the Church, shall be esteemed as the pious Jews esteemed Heathens and Publicans ; no intercourse shall be held with them. See Math. 18. 15-27.

ART. 17. If an offence be so gross, that forbearance would bring dishonor upon the religion of Jesus, and be a cause of scandal in the Church, the Consistory shall immediately upon the conviction of the offender, separate him from the Church, and put away the evil from it, agreeably to St. Paul's direction, 1 Cor. 5. 1-13.

ART. 18. Suspension from the Church may or may not be published to the congregation at the discretion of the Consistory, but sentence of excommunication against an offender, shall always be publicly pronounced.

ART. 19. If a reputed church-member have committed no crime which would seem to merit suspension or excommunication, but neglect to perform the duties of a member, such omission may be construed into a relinquishment of his membership; and his name accordingly, may be erased from the church-register, if after admonition by the Consistory, no reformation has taken place.

SECTION IV.

Restoration of the Penitent.

ART. 1. Suspended members, who give satisfactory proofs of genuine repentance and amendment, can be re-instated, after a reasonable time of probation, if they apply for the purpose to the minister or the Consistory.

The time of probation shall be longer or shorter in proportion to the reason there may be for more or less hesitation respecting the genuineness of the person's repentance and amendment.

ART. 2. Excommunicated persons who awake to repentance, may be restored by the same authority that excommunicated them, provided they not only give signs of sincerity manifest to the whole congregation, but also openly in the presence of the congregation, acknowledge their guilt, profess contrition, and promise through divine grace assisting them, in future to be more humble, circumspect and watchful.

ART. 3. A minister, elder or deacon, who has been deposed from office, may be re-instated in it, upon repentance and reformation. Such restoration to office, shall take place only under the cognizance of the judicatory by which the

individual was deposed, and then not until the evidences of the genuineness of his repentance and reformation are most unequivocal and a sufficient time has elapsed to show fully that they are not deceptive. The observance of this rule is particularly important in reference to a minister of the word, because he ought to be eminent above all men in purity and godliness; and in such case, it is necessary that it be approved by Synod, before it be conclusive and final.

A minister, who has been deposed for the sin of adultery or fornication, or for any offence that affixes a public scandal to the character which no after repentance can remove, ought not ordinarily to be restored to the ministry. In extraordinary cases, however, where the evidence of repentance is unequivocal, and the demand for restoration comes from the congregation in which the individual resided at the time of his deposition, the Classis may take the application for restoration into consideration, and if sustained by two-thirds of the members present and afterwards confirmed by the Synod, then and not till then, shall restoration take place.

PART FOURTH.

CUSTOMS AND USAGES.

ART. 1. The children of communicating members shall be received into the Church by baptism. Those are acknowledged as communicating members, who, having received confirmation, or been admitted on certificate from denominations in regular Correspondence with Synod, have not since been excluded from the communion of the Lord's supper.

A child may be baptized, if one of its parents be a communicating member; but if neither of them be such, it must remain, for the present, unbaptized, agreeably to 1 Cor. 7, 14.

ART. 2. Baptism may be administered at any time and in any suitable place: but as a holy ordinance of God, it must be performed in a solemn and holy manner, and for this purpose an occasion of public worship in the church or elsewhere, is the most appropriate.

ART. 3. Sponsors may be admitted in baptisms; but the parents themselves must be present, must answer to every question, and assume every obligation, and must do this solemnly as in the presence of God. But none shall be admitted as sponsors who are not in full communion with some Christian Church. Nothing in this article is to be so construed as to prevent persons who adopt orphans or other children into their families, from offering them to God in baptism.

ART. 4. Adults shall be baptized, if the minister has ascertained, by close scrutiny and frequent conversation, that they possess correct ideas of Christian doctrine, and have a practical knowledge of its truth and power. But if he discover deficiencies in these respects, he shall direct them to attend the usual catechetical instructions, and shall afterwards proceed in relation to them as with catechumens. If this, however, be impracticable, he shall in some way suitably instruct and exhort them. If they, notwithstanding, still continue ignorant, or without a genuine sense of religion, it shall be his duty to refer them to some future time.

ART. 5. Adults shall be baptized publicly, either in the church, or elsewhere, in the pres-

ence of a worshipping assembly. They do not afterwards need the rite of confirmation separately, but the minister shall, immediately after their baptism, lay his hands upon them and pronounce the benediction, thus uniting the rites of confirmation and baptism.

ART. 6. Before an adult is baptized, he shall conscientiously, in the presence of the assembly and before God, answer in the affirmative to the following interrogatories :

1. Do you believe, that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are divinely inspired Scriptures, have divine authority, and are the perfect and only rule of faith and life ?

2. Do you believe that the doctrine, which is received and publicly professed in the German Reformed Church and embodied in the Heidelberg Catechism, is truly the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures ; and will you live agreeably to it, adorn it in all things, and demean yourself as a true follower of Jesus Christ ?

3. Will you at all times submit to the rules of order and discipline in the German Reformed Church, and confirm them by your obedience, as it is meet for a follower of Jesus Christ ?

4. True faith, in the language of our Catechism, is not only a certain knowledge by which we hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the Gospel in our hearts, that not only to others, but to us also forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits. Do you sincerely profess that all this is your faith ?

ART. 7. Every minister shall give special attention to the instruction of the youth in his congregations, that they may thereby be prepared to make a public profession of faith as members of the Church, and to approach the Lord's table with just views and a proper frame of mind.

ART. 8. The Heidelbergh Catechism shall be used in the instruction of the youth. No other shall be employed which has not previously been approved and appointed to that use by the Synod.

ART. 9. The members of the Consistory, particularly the elders, as shepherds and overseers of the flock, shall be present at the catechetical instructions, as often as it may be practicable, for the purpose of observing the deportment of those who are taught, and their acquaintance with religious truth.

ART. 10. Persons possessing the requisite qualifications, shall upon application, be admitted to the communion of the Church by the rite of confirmation according to the mode prescribed in the Liturgy adopted by Synod, answering in the affirmative to the interrogatories proposed in the baptism of adults.

ART. 11. Before a confirmation, the minister shall, in the presence of the elders, diligently examine whether the applicants for admission to the communion of the Church, rightly understand the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion; and whether they manifest their practical influence, and purpose to lead a pious life. Those who continue ignorant of these doctrines, betray a want of genuine feeling, and do not authorize a reasonable hope that they will adorn

their profession, shall be precluded from confirmation.

ART. 12. Members of the Church removing from the bounds of one congregation to those of another, shall obtain a certificate of membership and dismissal, and connect themselves at the earliest opportunity, with the congregation to whose bounds they remove, and it shall be the duty of the Consistory to which they thus make application, to receive them unless they have good grounds to believe that the applicant is unworthy of Christian fellowship, in which case they shall return the certificate to the congregation from which it has been obtained, accompanying it with a specific statement of their objections to the Christian character of the individual and the grounds of those objections, so that a proper investigation may be instituted. Such certificate shall in no case be valid, if it be more than a year old, except where there has been no opportunity of presenting it to the Consistory. The connection of a dismissed member with the congregation dismissing him, does not cease until he is received into connection by another.

ART. 13. Members from sister denominations in regular correspondence with Synod, may be received into the membership of the Church by any congregation, upon their presenting to the Consistory a regular certificate of church-membership and dismissal.

ART. 14. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall be administered in every congregation where it is practicable twice a year and oftener if it be expedient, and in such manner as each congregation may think most conducive to their

spiritual edification, provided the essential features of the form of administration in the Liturgy be retained.

ART. 15. This sacred ordinance shall be administered publicly in the church. If any who have been regular communicants are prevented by disease or the infirmity of age from attending at church, they may receive the consecrated elements in any other place on the day when the Lord's Supper is celebrated by the congregation. They may receive them in the presence of other communicating members, after the conclusion of the public service. The elders may also convey them to those upon whom the minister of the word cannot personally attend, as was customary among the primitive Christians. This, however, shall not be done where it would give offence.

In every case, the same bread and wine shall be used, which were consecrated in the church; in order that the whole congregation may eat of one bread, and be thereby reminded that they are one body, as Paul observes, 1 Cor. 10. 17.

ART. 16. The custom of administering the sacrament to the sick, who have not been regular communicants, or at times when it is not celebrated in the church, is without example, both in the New Testament, and in the history of the primitive Christians. It arose at a later period, together with a multitude of abuses, and compliance with it therefore cannot be required of a minister of the word as a duty, nor incumbent as such upon the sick. Every minister is at liberty to examine this subject for himself, and to act in relation to it agreeably to his own conviction.

ART. 17. None but the regular members of the Church shall be admitted to the communion of the Lord's Supper. Communicating members of neighboring congregations and of sister denominations holding the essential doctrines of the Gospel, who are in good standing in their own congregations, may be permitted to unite in the observance of the Lord's Supper.

ART. 18. No minister shall admit to the sealing ordinances of the Church under any circumstances, any member of a neighboring congregation who has irregularly withdrawn himself from his own minister.

ART. 19. No minister of the Gospel shall accept payment for his services in baptizing or administering the Lord's Supper. As a laborer he has a perfect right to expect and to require from his congregation an adequate support for himself and family. Whoever refuses to contribute his portion to this object, is like him who withholds the laborer's hire. But he must never seek his support in a manner which would give a mercenary character to his office, and the appearance of a traffic to his religious ministrations. He must be willing rather to suffer in justice, than to bring dishonor upon his office and upon the religion of Jesus. In this he must be a follower of the holy Apostles, as they were followers of Christ.

For funeral services he is permitted to accept the compensation which is offered to him, because it is usually considered a part of his income, and his salary is, on that account, not unfrequently smaller than it would otherwise be, and too small for his maintenance.

For services of this kind a minister of the Gospel usually receives but little, while his co

gregations notwithstanding believe the contrary. Presuming that his income is large, they reduce his salary, though he be already pressed by want and the cares of subsistence.

It is therefore recommended to the congregations to give their minister an adequate salary, and to let all his particular ministrations be gratuitous.

What is here said has no reference to the solemnizing of marriages.

ART. 20. The public worship of the sanctuary shall consist in invocation, singing, prayer, reading the word, preaching a sermon or delivering a lecture and pronouncing the Benediction.

ART. 21. Family worship, and prayer meetings during the week wherever practicable, must be regarded as important religious observances.

ART. 22. No selection of Psalms or Hymns shall be used in public worship in the German Reformed churches, except such as has been approved and recommended by the Synod.

Rules and Amendments.

ART. 1. The original records, or exact copies thereof certified by the Stated Clerk, of all proceedings of Synod, or of the several Classes, and all other documents, letters, or papers having relation to the history of the German Reformed Church in America, shall be carefully kept up for preservation in a safe repository, to be called "The Archives of the German Reformed Church in the United States," which shall be provided by the Synod, and shall be in the keeping of such person or persons as the

Synod shall annually appoint; and no document or paper shall be removed therefrom, by any person, whatever, without license previously obtained from the Synod, or during its recess, from its Stated Clerk.

It shall be the duty of the Stated Clerk to deposite in the Archives all such documents, or papers, as shall come into his possession by virtue of his office, as provided in Article 9, Section III, Chapter II, Part II, of this Constitution; and he shall also procure all the documents, letters or papers, that may have been referred by Synod to any of its Boards or Committees, that may be worthy of preservation, and shall, in like manner, deposit them in the Archives.

ART. 2. Synod shall have power to make all such rules and regulations as may be necessary for carrying the principles of this Constitution into execution, except where provision is thereby made for that purpose.

ART. 3. Whatever in the previous constitutions or resolves of Synod is contrary to this Constitution, is hereby revoked and abrogated.

ART. 4. This Constitution shall not be altered in any article, except by the vote of two-thirds of the Synod, with the concurrence of two-thirds of the Classes.